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Fifteenth Meeting of the Latin Club

The fifteenth regular meeting of the New York Latin Club is called for Saturday May 13, at 12 M, in the Hotel St Denis, corner of Broadway and Eleventh Street, New York. Prof Tracy Peck of Yale, will address the Club.

H H BICE, *President*

A L HODGES, *Secretary*

Is a New Renaissance (in Classics) Possible?

In Three Parts—Part III

I should utterly weary my hearer or reader were I to proceed. Clearly Europe was still insatiable for this classicism, of which not even incipient and elementary encyclopedias were incipient or current.

Popes, emperors, reformers, all sought to gain the support of this man and classicist: from many of them he received pensions. Leo X was full of admiration: and no wonder: for keen as was the sagacity of the critic Erasmus for folly or ignorance, penetrating as was his critical vision in dealing with problems of literature, he saw no place for himself and his pensions in the Reformation movement which he had helped to prepare, and persisted in his conformity with the existing system. On the whole he greatly regretted the Reformation: "You remember Reuchlin", (Erasmus wrote Oct 10, 1525,) "The conflict was raging between the Muses and their enemies when up sprang Luther and the object thenceforward was to entangle the friends of literature in the Lutheran business so as to destroy both them and him together".

Meanwhile, while Latin slowly yielded to the development of vernacular and native letters in Germany, France and England, Greek had a kind of second and widely organized renaissance in the system of liberal education of Europe, in a preeminent degree too in the German Schools of the nineteenth century: through the organized movement begun by two pupils of Heyne of Goettingen, Friederich August Wolf and Wilhelm von Humboldt, both of them intimately related to the national movement of classic production of German letters focussed in Weimar, with Herder, Goethe,

Wieland, Schiller. Herder particularly (*v* Paulsen) was kept in a sacerdotal fervour of worship and culture embracing what these enthusiasts called with a facile flourish of didactic and propagandistic fiction, "Greekdom", "fair Humanity", "pure Humanity", and other products of their own flesh and blood, begotten out of the Rousseau-movement, a creed which believed in the flawlessness and sublime truth of man *per se*, if only he were emancipated from the shackles of a false culture and from the spiritual burthens and humility involved in and imposed by the Christian system, so that F A Wolf gave utterance to sentiments concerning the New Testament, in which one does not know what to marvel at more: the sovereign contempt of Wolf for the essence of the Christian Scriptures or the condescending indulgence in which he conceded a little merit to it as far as it contained elements of the Hellenic spirit.

But soon in this nineteenth century the allotment and subdivision of particular and special tasks under the guidance and stimulus of University professors as well as in the life-long prosecution of special lines by gymnasium teachers — all this I say led to such a thorough and detailed sifting of the classical remains, to so many systematic and exhaustive efforts at reconstructing the antiquity of Greece and Rome that the mere perusal of these achievements of modern erudition would demand no small fraction of a life-time. The influence of Boeckh particularly, the most eminent and influential disciple of Wolf, helped to build up this system of elaborating these various disciplines and refusing to be content with grammar, reading, and criticism. Thus, if we survey and enumerate the constituent elements of classical philology as it has been elaborated by the German academic movement and erudition of the nineteenth century (as laid down in Iwan Müller's "Handbook") we observe a subdivision into:

Definition and History of Classical Philology

Hermeneutics and Criticism

Palaeography and History of Scripts

Greek Epigraphy

Roman Epigraphy

Chronology
 Weights and Measures
 Greek Topography and History
 Roman ditto with specific topography also of Rome itself
 The specific institutions of Greek states, in war, legislation, religion, family and social customs
 Scientific attainments, History of Philosophy
 History of Greek Literature
 History of Roman Literature
 History of Byzantine Literature
 Greek Archaeology
 Roman Religion and Worship — Grammar, etc.

A cyclopedia, each volume of which means a life of learning and teaching. Amid this mass of erudition, to which we must add the monographs embalmed in many decades of learned productions sifted, classified, appreciated, recorded, in myriads of pages of small print: the doctor's dissertations and other forms of technical micrology — at this point, we may well ask, is a new renaissance in the Classics possible? Probably not until some Alexandrine library conflagration catastrophe has utterly annihilated this smothering erudition or until rejuvenation and simplification of literary taste, a return to, a sympathy with — that which Mr Gladstone speaking particularly of the Homeric Age has felicitously called "*Juventus Mundi*" — shall have come into our world.

What indeed *are* the motives that lead a young man to the professional and lifelong study of classical antiquity? I indeed do not dare to speak for others, I know well that the attainment of a doctor's degree, and even more the achievement of an independent professorship are actual motives with many, who thenceforward seem to become slowly and certainly atrophied in a life of respectable routine. I thought, thirty-two years ago, it was a glorious power to establish an intimate familiarity with chosen spirits of mankind; to enter into an intimacy of souls, to follow the thought of Greek thinkers with absolute ease and consummate familiarity: to compass, if not the world's literature, at least the Hellenic portion; and so also to follow the organic growth of the fine letters of this gifted people, from the heroic age of the Epic of Homer and Hesiod to the decay in Attic society as it is portrayed in the New Comedy of Menander: to pursue historiography from its crude and semi-mythological legends and local histories to the great monograph on the Peloponnesian

War, in which all the political life and all the essence of Greek history stand revealed, a model for historiography of all time. It is this wonderful progression of a quasi-organic order — followed in Aristotle and the Alexandrine age by a summarizing and constructive movement of significant and normative excellence, which raises Greek literature to a clear preeminence of its own. It is true the critical and thoroughgoing analysis of the tradition has taken away the glamour which ever seems to issue from Plutarch's biographical gallery of worthies: The matchless grace of symmetry that comes to us out of the sculptures of Pheidias, Polyclitus, Lysippus and Myron — it must not be projected into the Classic world at large: the idealization of Goethe or Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands* reveal the Rousseauism of these German disciples of that French leader — but they are woefully inadequate of a true conception of a world the judgment of which (as of no period of human culture) must not dispense with the consideration of the spiritual data.

Classic philology at the present time is in positive danger of a senility which comes out of the crushing burden of erudition and scholasticism: the wide reading and impregnation of the student's soul in the great texts — it is jeopardized by the postulates of secondary matter and scholastic accretion. The demand of premature specialization in our academic practice bids fair to still further accelerate this process of ossification. But, to conclude, abandon as we may the enthusiasm of Humanism for those letters and for that culture, there remains, I believe, immobile as the granite of the primeval hills, the body of Greek and Latin civilization in its place in the history of our human kind: struggling with the Christian order and passing away in part. No wise or grave contemplation can ignore this historical import. For, as Professor Gildersleeve said in 1869, "Greekdom is at once humanity's highest success and humanity's utter failure".

One of the earliest Humanists was the Emperor Hadrian. In him Greek letters, learning and art had found a devotee rare even in his day when it furnished the main culture of all well-to-do Romans; even before he mastered Roman oratory his youthful comrades called him a *Greekling* (*Græculus*): he became a virtuoso not only of taste and reading, but also of production and reproduction of literary forms; no less was he an adept in rhythm and music, in mathematics and painting: lyrics celebrated his passion, feats of arms and hunting

showed him a man of superb physical prowess and agility. The very specialists in all the arts and letters he often challenged in debate about problems of their own sphere, conscious to the full of that universality of human power and cultivation so extolled by our own Matthew Arnold as the *Summum bonum* in human life. And with this cultivation was coupled the unlimited power of imperial discretion or resolve: thus he built the great *Olympieion* at Athens, and, in Attic garb, celebrated with the Athenians their series of Dionysiac festal days, and had himself initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, and at his superb seat near Tibur he had faithful imitations of Classic Greek sites, such as the Academy of Plato, the Lyceum of Aristotle, the Prytaneion and the Stoa Poikile of Athens—but we shudder when we read how to his concubine Antinous, the surpassingly fair youth of Bithynia, he reared throughout the world of the Roman Empire busts and statues which were indeed not *andriantes* but *agalmata*, as Dio puts it, images of a deity craving and demanding worship.

When he came to die at Baiae on that gulf of Paradise, he fain would die and he could not, as though a slaughtered friend's curse pursued him thus. Culture and the soul! It came to the parting at last. The mighty concerns of the eternal problems may be sifted and put aside for a while but not forever: it was then when that famous stanza was uttered by the dying classicist, in which he has given vent to the gloom and impotence of our mere humanity: (in Spartianus ch 25)

Animula vagula blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca
Pallidula rigula nudula;
Nec, ut soles, habis iocos?

E G SIHLER,
New York University

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